

Sex (Gender) Discrimination

Discrimination based on sex is illegal in Minnesota.

Under the Minnesota Human Rights Act, sex is a “protected class.” And it is illegal to treat you differently because you are a man or a woman in:

- Employment
- Housing
- Public Accommodations
- Public Service
- Education
- Credit
- Business

These are called “protected areas.” There are some exceptions about how sex is covered under the Minnesota Human Rights Act. To learn more about protected areas and protected classes, read [Your Rights](#).

Examples of what could be sex discrimination

Unfair treatment based on sex happens a lot. But not every unfair act is illegal. Here are some examples of what could be sex discrimination:

- Your employer fires you because you are pregnant.
- Your teacher gives you lower grades because you are female.
- A company pays its male workers more money than its female workers for the same work. The company does this because it thinks women are inferior to men.

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is a kind of sex discrimination. It can happen to women, men, boys and girls.

Sexual harassment happens when someone makes unwelcome sexual advances towards you. And these advances happen often enough to create a hostile environment for you at your job, in school or other protected area where the harassment is happening.

If you do not do what the person harassing you wants, many times this person will hold something over your head—not give you something you want or are entitled to—like a job, a good grade at school, or better treatment from a business.

Examples of what could be sexual harassment

- Your landlord talks to you in a very personal way about sexual things, and says you will not have to pay rent if you spend more time with him/her. Your landlord does this a lot, but when you tell your landlord to stop, he/she does not.
- Your teacher says he/she will give you a better grade if you will have sex with him/her. Your teacher says this to you a lot, and it makes you afraid to go to class.
- Kids at school touch you and talk to you in a “dirty” way. This happens every week. You tell your teachers, but the school does nothing.
- Your boss says he/she will give you a raise in pay if you have sex with him/her. You tell your boss no, and he/she fires you.

When an employer, school, business or other protected area knows there is sexual harassment happening, it must take quick action to do something about it. It cannot pretend the harassment is not going on.

Can I be punished for filing a sex discrimination charge?

It is illegal for someone to punish you—or get back at you—for filing a sex discrimination charge.

This kind of revengeful punishment is called “reprisal.” You could file a separate charge of discrimination—this time for reprisal—against the person who is punishing you for filing the sex discrimination charge.

What to do

If you think you are a victim of discrimination:

- Write down what happened to you if you think it was unfair.
- Write down the dates when the unfair treatment happened.
- Write down the names of other people that were there.
- Write down what the people who were there said.

Do not wait!

Sometimes it is hard to say what is discrimination and what is not discrimination—every situation is different. But if you think you are a victim of discrimination, do not wait. Contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights immediately. You have one year after the discrimination happened to file a complaint.

How to Contact Us

We take phone calls Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Phone: 651-539-1100 (TTY 651-296-1283); Toll free: 1-800-657-3704



You do not need an appointment to visit our office

We accept walk-ins from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Our address

Minnesota Department of Human Rights
Freeman Building
625 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Email address

info.MDHR@state.mn.us

If you are emailing the department about filing a charge of discrimination and do not receive a reply within five business days, please contact our intake unit by phone at 651-539-1100 (TTY 651-296-1283) or Toll Free at 800-657-3704.

Getting an interpreter

If you need an interpreter to help communicate with our office, we will provide one for you free. We have staff members who speak Hmong and Spanish. Call us and say, “I need a (say your language here) interpreter.”

This document is not a complete answer to sex discrimination under the Minnesota Human Rights Act.